

Working Together

Issue 21

Fall 2005



VAPHS Continues to Improve Access to Health Care for Veterans by Opening a 5th Community Based Outpatient Clinic



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A Message from the Director

University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240
1-866 4 VA PITT
(1-866-482-7488)

Check out our Web site at:
www.va.gov/pittsburgh

Michael E. Moreland
Director

Rajiv Jain, MD
Chief of Staff

Patricia Nealon
Associate Director

Ira Richmond
Associate Director
for Patient Care Services

Robert Callahan
Associate Director
for Site Management

The VA Pittsburgh Working Together

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To submit articles, editorials, letters
or story ideas for possible inclusion,
please contact **David Cowgill** at
412-688-6224 or via e-mail:
david.cowgill@med.va.gov

Editor
David E. Cowgill
Public & Community
Relations Coordinator

Design & Layout
Rodney E. Boyce
Creative Director
Square Peg Design

Photography
Warren Park
Glenn Hangard

On the Cover:

A formal dedication ceremony
for the new Fayette County
CBOC was held in May.

Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

I would like to take the time to express how proud I am of all those VAPHS employees who came to the aid of our fellow Americans who were devastated by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast area. Many VAPHS employees quickly jumped at the opportunity to provide immediate assistance for those who endured the hurricane and struggled in its aftermath.

As of November 2, 2005, 45 dedicated VAPHS employees were deployed to the disaster stricken areas. Employees from all service lines, including physicians, psychologists, nurses, dieticians, police officers, clerks, pharmacy technicians, personnel assistants, and respiratory and physical therapists were deployed to places such as Jackson and Biloxi, Mississippi; New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Alexandria, Louisiana; Houston, Marlin and Waco, Texas; and Washington, DC. Approximately 50 additional VAPHS employees responded to the call for help and were prepared to volunteer their time to support the efforts. In addition, a VAPHS nurse was also sent to Florida to aid in the Hurricane Wilma support efforts. These employees gave selflessly of their time and were prepared to sacrifice their personal lives in order to help others.

Two "virtual" volunteers will work from Pittsburgh with VISN 16 staff to place VISN 16 employees in other assignments and assist in helping to identify housing needs for affected employees. Many employee organizations recognized the important needs of these victims and put together fund-raising efforts and donation drives and many more employees responded by supporting them. Our volunteers sent cases of supplies including toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs, soap, socks, lap robes, and deodorant to be distributed to the evacuees.

The dedication and commitment of our employees constantly impresses and amazes me. The VAPHS is fortunate to have such compassionate employees.

Please make sure you take time to look at the photographs on the back cover that some of our employees who were deployed brought back with them. This Fall issue of "Working Together" for 2005 also features an article on how the VAPHS enhances access to care for veterans through our community based outpatient clinics, Performance Vital Signs update for FY05, and how dining is enhanced for inpatients at our Highland Drive Division. It also spotlights the many outstanding achievements and milestones of our staff.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Moreland

Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Alan Bernstein, Heinz Nursing Program Leader, Director Michael Moreland, and Ira Richmond, Associate Director of Patient Care Services, were among VAPHS leaders present to celebrate with VAPHS Cameos of Caring award winners.

Vital Signs

Congratulations to VAPHS Nurses Honored As Most Exemplary in Region

The Seventh Annual University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing Cameos of Caring Awards Gala was held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center on October 1, 2005. The Cameos of Caring award honors nurses who demonstrate excellence in nursing care, serve as an effective advocate for patients and their families, and act as a role model for the profession.

This year 42 nurses from 36 hospitals in the area were honored. Four VAPHS nurses received Cameos of Caring Awards.

Heinz Division Cameo of Caring Award Winner: Charmaine Edwards, RN

Ms. Edwards works on the dementia specialty care unit at Heinz where she approaches each day with a lively spirit and a kind demeanor. Her years of experience in home care set the stage for developing trust and friendships with even the most challenging patients in dementia care.

Highland Drive Division Cameo of Caring Award Winner: Susan O'Neill, RN

Ms. O'Neill is a source of hope and comfort to the many chronically mentally ill patients who pass through the doors of 2-3 East. She celebrates any small step of success that patients take on the road to becoming the best of what their lives can be.

University Drive Division Cameo of Caring Award Winner: Cynthia Hobbs, RN, BSN

Ms. Hobbs works as a staff nurse on 4W, a surgical telemetry unit, where she has become an inspiring part of the team. She serves as mentor, teacher, patient advocate and a superb clinician on a daily basis while sharing her zeal for the essence of nursing.

Advanced Practice Nurse Cameo of Caring Award Winner: Eugene Lewis, RN, MSN, CRNP

Mr. Lewis is a certified registered nurse practitioner on the Dementia Specialty Care Unit. He believes nursing is the perfect opportunity to help those in need, especially when they can't help themselves. "No other profession brings that human touch to wellness," says Lewis.

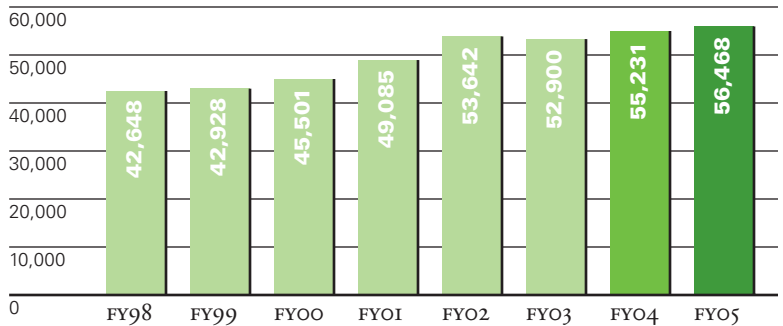
Advanced Practice Nurse Nominee: Ann Trageser, RN, MSN, CRRN

As a clinical nurse specialist in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department, Ms. Trageser is a dedicated case manager and patients rely on her to help them with their problems regardless of whether or not they fall into her purview.

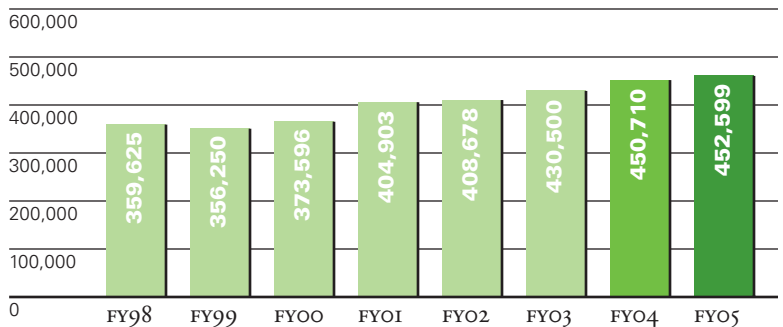


WARREN PARK PHOTO

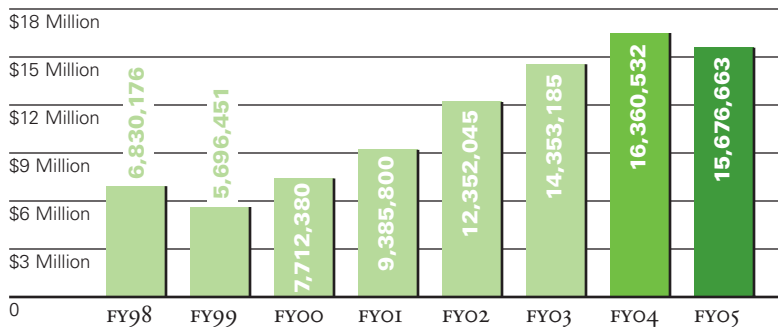
UNIQUE PATIENTS



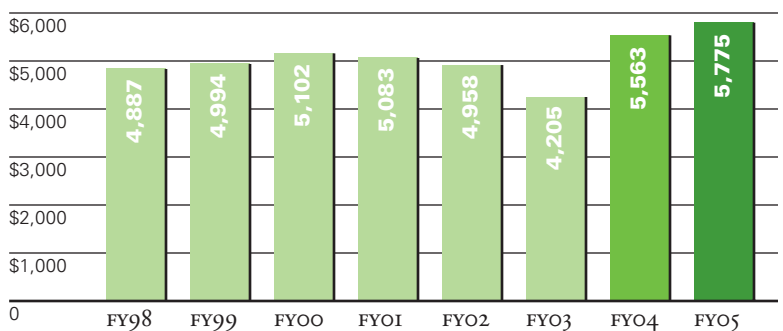
OUTPATIENT VISITS



MEDICAL CARE COST RECOVERY



OBLIGATIONS/UNIQUE PATIENT



Director Michael Moreland, Charmaine Edwards, Cynthia Hobbs, Susan O'Neill, Eugene Lewis, and Ira Richmond, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, following the Cameos of Caring awards presentation.

COMMUNITY BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS



WE at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System know that having high quality health care services close to home is vitally important. One of the strategic goals of VAPHS is to assure timely access to quality health care for veterans.

Routine primary care appointments and preventive screening are proven to be vital for the health and wellbeing of veterans. Having to drive a great distance for quality care doesn't have to be a reason for veterans to not get the routine medical care they deserve.

That's why the VA Pittsburgh continues to enhance the care and services provided at community based outpatient clinics (CBOC) in our area. This year the fifth CBOC was opened in Uniontown to serve the veterans of Fayette County.

All five CBOCs of the VA Pittsburgh provide basic primary care services including general medical care, physical exams, laboratory, and X-ray. They also provide dietary (including diabetes education), mental health, social work and podiatry services.

The newest CBOC under the VAPHS began seeing patients in March 2005. A formal dedication ceremony was held on May 10, 2005, with Secretary of the VA, James Nicholson, serving as the keynote speaker.



○ Aliquippa/Beaver County

2360 Hospital Drive
Aliquippa, PA
(724) 857-0424

Year Opened: 1998

Outpatient Visits in FY 05: 6,713

Staff: 2 providers, 7 support staff



○ Fayette County

404 West Main Street
Uniontown, PA, 15401
(724) 439-4990

Year Opened: 2005

Outpatient Visits in FY 05: 2,914

Staff: 2 providers, 7 support staff



○ Greensburg

Hempfield Plaza, Route 30
Greensburg, PA
(724) 837-5200

Year Opened: 1998

Outpatient Visits in FY 05: 11,038

Staff: 3 providers, 10 support staff

PATIENT CLINICS



○ Washington

100 Ridge Avenue
Washington, PA
(724) 250-7790

Year Opened: 2001

Outpatient Visits in FY 05: 8,339

Staff: 3 providers, 9 support staff



○ St. Clairsville

(first CBOC opened by VAPHS)
107 Plaza Drive, Suite "0"
St. Clairsville, Ohio
(740) 695-9321

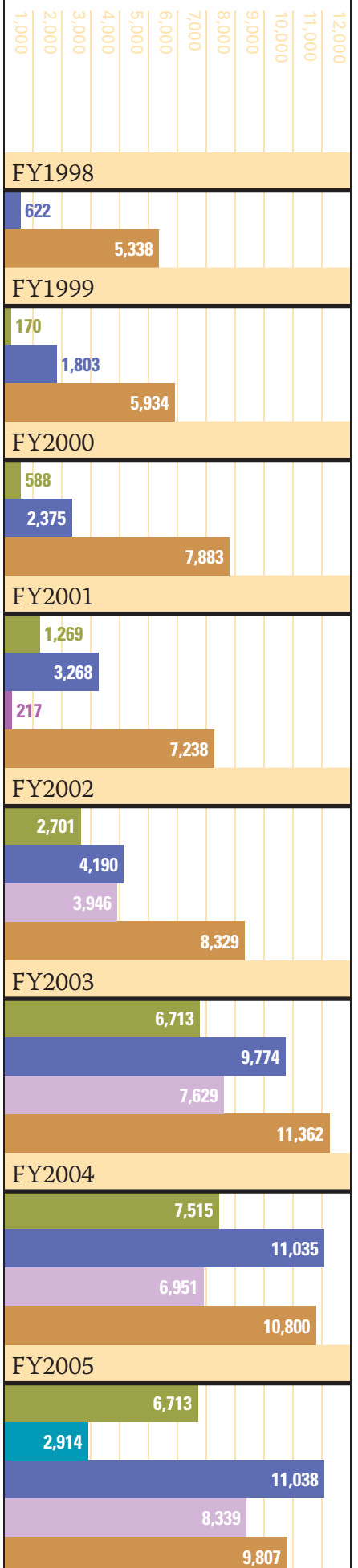
Year Opened: 1996

Outpatient Visits in FY 05: 9,807

Staff: At the time of opening, St. Clairsville had 1 doctor/provider and 3 support staff. They now have 4 providers and 13 support staff.

Construction: Construction has nearly tripled the square footage of the building since 1996. The clinic has grown from two exam rooms to eight exam rooms. After the first of the year (2006) the clinic will be moving into a larger facility.

CBOC Outpatient Visits



ALL PHOTOS BY WARREN PARK

Mailbox

Dear Mr. Moreland,

A large portion of my health care over the last few years has been associated with the anticoagulant clinic at the University Drive Division of the veterans' hospital. Each and every pharmacist, staff and student alike have demonstrated remarkable patient care.

I would, however, like to mention one particular pharmacist, Mr. Matthew Kruszewski, whom I've encountered on many of these clinical visits for the purpose of having my blood levels, (INR), monitored. His dedication to his craft shines bright, is genuine, and is the best I've seen among anyone, anywhere in a very long time.

In support of this claim, I can provide some various reasons. His unwavering professionalism, both in knowledge and attitude, never shows the slightest deviation, while at the same time, provides a down-to-earth demeanor, thus making him easily approachable, and proves he is a people person; something extremely vital to patient care. I can attest to this especially, because there have been occasions when my medication dosage and care plan got off course due to my own culpability. While showing extreme patience while working to get me back on track, Matthew's coordinating efforts were concise, and the net results were realized with absolute precision. A thorough follow-up was performed, and patient satisfaction was achieved as well.

In closing, I would like to say that Matthew is a gentleman, and clearly has the talent to gain a person's trust especially when someone's health is an issue. He is a tremendous asset to the U.S. Veterans' Affairs Healthcare System. It is my hope that his superiors will recognize, and acknowledge his exemplary work in the patient care field, which will provide advancements, and enable him to easily attain higher goals in his pharmaceutical career.

Sincerely,

—K.M.



INPATIENTS ENJOY ENHANCED DINING EXPERIENCE AT HIGHLAND DRIVE DIVISION

Dear Mr. Moreland,

Just want to thank you and your great staff from maintenance, construction workers, valets, security, cafeteria, store, post office, chaplains, administration, nurses, doctors, and all others for the courteous care and help to me and my family and friends at the time of our stay in the VA hospital with my husband, who had many visits and tests, then was admitted. You and your staff are outstanding. Can't thank you enough for what's in my heart. Every unit and every person excels all others. Your hospital and staff are the best; clean, courteous, neat, and well educated, always willing to help with update of patients. Great job—keep up the good work. Our veterans are worth it.

Knowing someone really cares and isn't just doing a job. I am not the only one who thinks this way. I have had the privilege to talk to many others while there and at home. Same feeling, "great."

I wish I could thank each and everyone who touched our life with their expertise, care, concerns, love and friendship. I know I have forgotten some but mean well and many thanks to them, too, including volunteers and other employees. You and your staff are a real dedicated group of people.

Thank you again and again
God Bless all.

—C.S. and family and friends

Dear Ms. Bechtold:

This letter is written to commend you and more importantly the dozens of people I have had contact with while my dear friend, B.H., had been cared for by the VA. B. died two weeks ago, but when Dr. Jaffe and Sue Pataky told me that it was peaceful and without pain or trauma, I had full confidence that he had not only received the best and most appropriate medical care but the continuing family-like attention that I have observed when I have visited B. over the years.

When many people, too often veterans, are in their final years and days, there is no one around who cares or even knows the person. But the attitudes that permeate your Aspinwall facility erase that notion. Those professionals became more like caring family members to B. than one normally expects. Speaking as a veteran, I am very happy to have witnessed care that enables a person to leave this earth with peace in his heart and a satisfied mind. The work that has been done by the detail people to help manage the burial and funeral arrangements has also been greatly appreciated. Thanks to you and all who are fulfilling your mission in an extraordinary way.

Yours truly,

—J.M.

With the goal of taking behavioral health inpatients at the Highland Drive Division of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System on a vacation to Italy, the Dining Enhancement Committee hosted a very special meal for patients on October 17, 2005. *Papa Callahano's Italian Ristorante* began work at 7:30 in the morning with the baking of bread throughout the ward. When lunch time arrived, patients were thrilled to be seated at tables adorned in red and white linens while waiters dressed in black and white poured "sparkling wines" of red and white from plastic decanters into plastic wine glasses. Patients were given a menu of their usual meal choices to choose from and were entertained by an accordion player. Even paper curtains were created to aid in creating an ambiance of Italy. For that afternoon, these patients at Highland Drive were transported out of the VAPHS into an old-world, Italian restaurant.



SPOTLIGHT ON Ronald Rabold

MSW, LCSW

RONALD RABOLD, MSW, LCSW, BEGAN HIS VA CAREER AT THE PITTSBURGH VAMC IN 1974 AS A CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER ASSIGNED TO OUTPATIENT/ADMISSIONS SERVICES. In 1978 he became the lead social worker at the long term care facility, now known as the Heinz Division. Since 1981 he has served as the supervisory social worker in the Geriatrics and Extended Health Care Service Line. In October 2004 he was appointed the Social Work Executive for the entire VAPHS. On September 5, 2005, Mr. Rabold was appointed as the Vice President, Community Based Care Service Line. In this position, he will be

WARREN PARK PHOTO



responsible for the management of the following programs: Domiciliary, Healthcare for Homeless Veterans, CWT/Vocational Rehabilitation, PRRPT, Home Based Primary Care, Homemaker/Home Health Aide, Community Nursing Home, Residential Care Home, Community Health Nurse, Community Support/MHICM, SCI Coordinator, VIST, Social Work Section/UD, Social Work Section/Heinz, OIF/OEF Coordinator, Peer-to-Peer Coordinator, and Care Coordination/Home Telehealth.

For the last five years Ron has also served as chairperson of the Biomedical Ethics Advisory Committee. He also served as chairperson for Performance Improvement Teams that resulted in enhancing the quality of life and care for patients hospitalized at the Heinz Division. During his career he has coordinated several programs, including the community nursing home program, the residential care home program, the respite care program and the social work student trainee program. He also led the staff in preparing patients for the move into the new facility when the old Aspinwall building was replaced by the H. John Heinz III Progressive Care Center.

Mr. Rabold served in the United States Air Force as a medical service specialist from 1965 until 1968. He was assigned to a Class B Dispensary, caring for service personnel and their family members. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He is married to Debby and recently celebrated their 30th anniversary. Their son Kevin is a senior at North Allegheny High School.

EMPLOYEES WITH 20 years OR more OF SERVICE!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period May 2005 to October 2005.

35 years

Walter T. Kalista
Clinical Support

Pamela C. Kushnir
Clinical Support

Lydia B. Robles
Critical Care

Jeannette M. Robinson
Nutrition & Food

30 years

Ronald Baldwin
Facilities Management

Mary C. Boburczak
Director's Office

Michael E. Flourney
Vet Center/McKeesport

Andrea D. Glacken
Business Service

John A. Horton
Facilities Management

Daniel R. Pagath
Facilities Management

Marian Price
Business Service

25 years

Martin D. Choma
Surgical Specialty

Colleen L. Decker
Behavioral Health

Lynne D. Dickerhoff
Business Service

William D. James, Sr.
Facilities Management

William R. Morgan
Facilities Management

Mary Ann Meader
Patient Care Services

Jack Paternoster
Facilities Management

Janice M. Rihely
Patient Care Services

Mary V. Rudy
Patient Care Services

Michael E. Sease
Information Resource Management

A. Jean Tait
Clinical Support

Jeanne E. Walters
Patient Care Services

Charles E. Warfield
*Associate Director/
Police Service*

Mary C. Williams
Patient Care Services

20 years

David M. Barnas
Behavioral Health

Delaine M. Burkett
Vet Center/McKeesport

Deborah L. Byrd
Business Service

Elaine G. Hatala
Behavioral Health

Cynthia J. Howard
Behavioral Health

Priscilla J. Kaden
Patient Care Services

Carolyn D. Kimes
Clinical Support

James A. King
Facilities Management

Virginia Legler
Community Based Care

Leonard E. Leon
Facilities Management

Herbert L. McWhinney
Behavioral Health

Daniel F. Nesta
Facilities Management

Eric A. Ogren
Medical Specialty

Constance M. Orsino
Clinical Support

Lee A. Rozier
Nutrition & Food

Herman H. Smith
Nutrition & Food

Michelle Sullivan
Geriatrics & Extended Care

Patrick J. Tim
Facilities Management

Anthony F. Tomei
Nutrition & Food

Joy A. Watson
Information Resource Management

Alan H. White
Facilities Management

Mark A. Williams
Facilities Management

Jeffrey K. Yao
General Medical Research

CONGRATULATIONS!



▼ VAPHS Staff Responds to Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts

The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System has been committed to this critical endeavor and has remained in a constant state of readiness to lend any assistance needed to the victims of this horrible natural disaster. As of November 2, 2005, 45 dedicated VAPHS employees were deployed to the disaster stricken areas.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JUDY SIDDLE AND JACK CRAWFORD